THEOSOPHY

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With the first idea, which emanated from the double-sexed and hitherto-inactive Deity, the first motion was communicated to the whole universe, and the electric thrill was instantaneously felt throughout the boundless space. Spirit begat force, and force matter; and thus the latent deity manifested itself as a creative energy.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

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THE THEOSOPHY COMPANY

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II *The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study; and*

III *The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.*

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AUM

He who quotes the Sacred texts but is lazy and will not apply, he is like a cowherd counting the cows of others. He shares not the blessings of the Good Life.

—*The Dhammapada*

THEOSOPHY

VOLUME 67 APRIL, 1979 NUMBER 6

Household Life

THE PERFORMANCE OF DUTY

WHAT use can we make of the law of cycles? This is a subject which contains or includes, potentially, all that can be known of the world around us; and all that we can know, too, of ourselves as evolving beings. All alternations of experience can be regarded as examples of cyclic law or succession. All that we say about "time" is at root a recognition of how cycles mark off the intervals of experience. The study of cycles, then, is the study of universal process.

Our own evolution or development proceeds under the law of cycles. To know the law of cycles, or those portions of its application which are intimately connected with our lives, is to know how to harmonize our efforts with this universally governing principle of action.

There is for example much depression in the world of today from recognition of the downward trend in the affairs of nations. With the onset of World War II, a number of distinguished individuals who had worked for the good of all felt that there was no longer hope for a better future and took their own lives. They did not know, could not imagine, the basic principle that new beginnings follow declines and failures, that every death is succeeded by a birth. The Kali Yuga finally wears away and is followed by a Golden Age.

Knowledge of cycles introduces a true time-scale to the study of the affairs of mankind. Knowledge of reincarnation, a fundamental cycle, relieves the despair that overtakes many when death

—one's own or of a loved one—becomes imminent. From knowledge of reincarnation and its cyclic processes it is possible to understand how it is that death ever comes as a friend. The same enlightenment may be applied to the disintegration of civilizations. Ages of high culture are born, come to flower, and die, and it is not this inevitable decay of form that is important, but the increment of gain that may result, then to be carried forward to renewed expression in some other region of the world. The inner progress which may go on in *any* cycle is the value which knowledge of cycles brings to the fore. One learns, finally, to extract the good from each event, whether pleasant or unpleasant. The one thing certain is that there will be change—and change for the better for those who understand and work with the law. This is surely the reason for the counsel, "Shun ignorance, and likewise shun illusion." The wise man is neither cast down nor elated by the inevitable course of events, but collaborates with cyclic law.

In her article, "The Fall of Ideals," H. P. B. looks beyond the oscillations so plainly evident in the psychic development of mankind. She wrote:

> In a world of illusion in which the law of evolution operates, nothing could be more natural than that the ideals of MAN—as a unit of total, or mankind—should be forever shifting. A part of the Nature around him, that Protean, ever-changing Nature, every particle of which is incessantly transformed, while the harmonious body remains as a whole ever the same, like these particles man is continually changing, physically, intellectually, morally, spiritually. At one time he is at the topmost point of the circle of development; at another, at the lowest. And, as he thus alternately rises and sinks, and his moral nature responsively expands or contracts, so will his moral code at one time embody the noblest altruistic and aspirational ideals, while at the other, the ruling conscience will be but the reflection of selfishness, brutality and faithlessness. But this, however, is so only on the external, illusionary plane. In their internal, or rather *essential* constitution, both nature and man are at one, as their essence is identical. All grows and develops and strives toward perfection on the former planes of externality or, as well said by a philosopher, is—"ever becoming"; but on the ultimate plane of the spiritual essence all Is, and remains therefore immutable. It is toward this eternal *Esse* that every thing, as every being, is gravitating, gradually, almost imperceptibly, but as surely as the Universe of stars and worlds moves towards a mysterious point known to, yet still unnamed by, astronomy, and called by the Occultists—the *central Spiritual Sun.*

Astral light = judge + executioner

Like some other statements by H.P.B., this account of the operation of cyclic law, while philosophically illuminating, is so awesome in its scope that its promise may seem distant indeed to those struggling along in the here-and-now world. Is it possible to bring its meaning a little closer to us? For this sort of help, we turn to Mr. Judge. In his *Epitome*, in a discussion of the Astral Light, he shows *how* the law of cycles operates during a dark age, and what humans can do to improve its influence. He says:

> In the Kali-Yuga we are hypnotized by the effect of the immense body of images in the Astral Light, compounded of all the deeds, thoughts, and so forth of our ancestors, whose lives tended in a material direction. These images influence the inner man—who is conscious of them—by suggestion. In a brighter age the influence of such images would be towards Truth. The effect of the Astral Light, as thus molded and painted by us, will remain so long as we continue to place those images there, and it thus becomes our judge and executioner. Every universal law thus contains within itself the means for its own accomplishment and the punishment for its violation, and requires no further authority to postulate it or to carry out its decrees.
>
> The Astral Light by its inherent action both evolves and destroys forms. It is the universal register. Its chief office is that of a vehicle for the operation of the laws of Karma, of the progress of the principle of life, and it is thus in a deep sense a medium or "mediator" between man and his Deity—his higher spirit.

The psycho-dynamics of this process is spelled out in some detail in the *Path* article, "Living the Higher Life," where it is said:

> Once, in an age and in a country, when and where household life continues to be ideal, one single wretch commits the first act of transgression by impetuously rushing into the circle of ascetics, or by dying before wholly discharging his duty to his family, the natural result is that both himself, his family, and his nation, become thereby seriously affected. The Akasa (Ether, the Astral Light) becomes affected by the impulse to transgress in this direction; this impulse forces itself gradually (with accumulated interest, redoubled force) upon others; the ignoble example becomes a precedent; other cases of a like nature follow in quick succession. In course of time, (just when a sad descending cycle begins, such is the divine intelligence of the law that economizes energies and makes things fit it) the leading of the ideal family life becomes almost impossible and very rare; the whole community is thus ruined. Learned and great adepts retire to other spheres (where there then is an ascending cycle) and leave the

nation to be swallowed by a cataclysm after ages of degradation and vice.

> Let us now reverse this case, and suppose that in the most degenerate nation, in the darkest of cycles, one philanthropist becomes unselfish and intelligent enough to set a noble and intelligent example by fulfilling all family duties; then, as naturally as in the preceding case, the precedent gradually gains acceptance; the way is paved for the advent of an ascending cycle; Gnanis bless the noble man and come down from other unfavorable spheres, where descending cycles begin to dawn.

We live in a time when it is quite possible to see both of these cycles—the ascending and the descending—proceeding at the same time. Read for example the description of the Kali Yuga by an ancient writer (*The Secret Doctrine* I, 377) for specific identification of present practices and tendencies. Then, for H.P.B.'s account of the counter-tendency, there is her discussion of men like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky in "The Cycle Moveth" and "The Tidal Wave." A similar contrast should not be difficult to draw today. The cycle of decline is far more apparent in our time, but meanwhile the counter-current of what seems a true attempt to renew the "Household life," in more than one sense, is becoming evident. Ecology means by derivation the housekeeping of all earth, and joined with this practical idealism of the day is the widespread interest in the restoration of community. In addition there are writers who embody themes of what a century ago would have been termed "duty," while the women's movement of the present, although somewhat frenzied at its fringes, nonetheless represents a renewal of the natural dignity of half of humankind, emphasizing the particular qualities and capacities for good that woman represents. A modern poet, Gary Snyder, has published a book of essays called *Earth's Household*, and another poet, Wendell Berry, also a farmer, has written with great insight on the cultural needs of the country. (Berry's book, *The Unsettling of America,* was published in 1977 by the Sierra Club.) Another sort of planetary housekeeping is the subject of works by Amory Lovins, a young physicist who has attracted wide attention by his well-argued rejection of great, centralized power plants for nuclear energy, proposing instead, diversified collaboration with nature's resources of sun and wind. Scholars are taking a second look at the educational and moral philosophy of Leo Tolstoy, and

a well-known essayist, Theodore Roszak, has directed attention to works by H. P. Blavatsky.

These tendencies, resulting from the independent action of individuals, are finding expression through small groups, and, taken together, they may be said to constitute the beginnings of a renaissance of the "inner life" of our civilization. They have little or nothing to do with the devices of power politics, representing rather fresh and constructive attitudes of mind. Where does the manifest vigor in these developments come from? The ideas behind them are seldom new, but they are recognized with new eyes, whatever the sources of inspiration.

In "Synthesis of Occult Science," Mr. Judge speaks of an aspect of cyclic law which has direct bearing on such renewals. He says that the beings of each plane of evolutionary development are drawn upward and onward by the light coming from the next higher stage. There is then this "gleam" of higher possibilities which illumines the path of the pioneers of the race; and so it is, in terms of the succession of the races, that the temper and spirit that will prevail for sixth-race mankind, and will be in some measure anticipated in the sixth sub-race of the Fifth root-race, has luminous presence in the intuitions of the most thoughtful and unselfish members of the men of our time.

Already, for one thing, there is a better understanding of the meaning of human progress. Close to ninety years ago, Mr. Judge gave the Theosophical view of this question in an article on the Kali Yuga, remarking, "To the Occultist, material advancement is not of the quality of light, and he finds no proof of progress in merely mechanical contrivances that give comfort to a few of the human family while the many are in misery." This idea could hardly be widely accepted in the nineteenth century, but today the criticism has become almost conventional. The devastating effect of the machine age coupled with blind devotion to technology has brought publication of numerous well-argued volumes exposing the fallacies in these feverish pursuits and demonstrating their confining and culturally impoverishing consequences. (See for example Jacques Ellul's *The Technological Society* and, with application to agriculture, Lappé and Collins' *Food First.*)

Such broadly Theosophic interpretations of current events are encouraging, enabling us to recognize in the present the seeds of a better age to come, and giving confidence that brave and persis-

tent efforts to change the prevailing way of life are the premonitory expressions of an awakening that will eventually become a great tide of transition.

But important as these things may be for reassurance during a time of trouble, there is another aspect of the law of cycles of even greater significance. This is seen in the teaching of the Astral Light. Reformers have their necessary role, yet the future is most of all determined by the everyday thinking and acting of the embodied souls who make up the collective identity of mankind. How they feel and think exercises its influence on the Astral Light, so that good and bad tendencies in others are either strengthened or reduced. The task of all who come to understand these things is to establish astral reflections for good alone. As Mr. Judge says: "In a brighter age the influence of such images would be towards Truth." The housewife at her tasks, the builder with his tools, the driver of a public vehicle, the clerk in an office, the mechanic at his bench—all have a part in the generation of the future through their thought. This is where the real life of mankind proceeds and is altered for better or for worse. It requires teachers and heroes to turn the tide of an age, but faithful companions are needed to reinforce the currents thus set going, by giving them the support of their devotion and strength.

In this, as in all else, we have instruction from the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Krishna, Arjuna's counselor, calls upon him to do one thing above all—his *Duty*. This means to order his own life and thinking as befits one who has the Karma of a Prince. The doing of duty is the heart of right action, and naught but good flows from such a devoted life. The wise man, Krishna says, should not "create confusion in the understandings of the ignorant, who are inclined to outward works, but by being himself engaged in action should cause them to act also." This is the practical application to which Krishna calls Arjuna, not the high conquest of outward works.

This rule does not change. By means of duty individuals acquire the Karmic stamina to carry them through crises and tests. By means of duty they increase the moral resources of their community, creating islands of brotherhood—or nuclei, as the student of Theosophy would say—which in time will become firm channels for the flow of constructive energies. Even if not qualified as yet for initiation as adepts, "we ought to and could," a *Path* writer says, "go on developing ourselves in the ordinary way," trying to

"secure the necessary means by leading an unselfish life and setting an example to others, and this is the stage of nearly all ordinary Theosophists."

It would be a mistake to suppose that following this advice will be of no service to the masses of mankind. The masses, as ever, have their tendencies determined by the images in the Astral Light. Faithful performance of duty creates images which affect the decisions of everyday life. We—all of us—live in a sea of psychic influences. The flow of a sea is altered by currents, and currents in the Astral Light result from the thought and feeling of human beings who know that all have psychic connection with one another, from the higher reaches of the Akasa down to the mundane level of the Astral Light. It is the astral principle which anon saves and anon damns. It records, establishes, and reinforces the habits of all in the world. Those who change their habits are pioneers in altering the influence of the Astral Light. No one is exempt from this capacity and responsibility. As Mr. Judge wrote in his article, "The Kali Yuga—The Present Age":

> The spread of the knowledge of the laws of Karma and Reincarnation and of a belief in the absolute spiritual unity of all beings will alone prevent this drift [toward materialism]. The cycle must, however, run its course, and until that is ended all beneficial causes will of necessity act slowly and not to the extent they would in a brighter age. As each student *lives* a better life and by his example imprints upon the astral light the picture of a higher aspiration acted in the world, he *thus aids souls of advanced development to descend from other spheres* where the cycles are so dark that they can no longer stay there.

In his *Path* articles, Mr. Judge gives instruction in the occult bearing of the law of cycles on the efforts of men to help their fellows. The masses, he shows, are most truly served by those who know and do their duty. Only the rediscovery of duty by the few, who over centuries may grow into the many, can change this influence. The rule in this, which never changes, was given by Krishna long centuries ago:

> Even if the good of mankind only is considered by thee, the performance of thy duty will be plain; for whatever is practiced by the most excellent men, that is also practiced by others. The world follows whatever example they set.

THE "LIGHTING-UP" OF MANAS

THE wonderful story of the Lighting of *Manas* captures our imagination; its mystery impels us to study closely each detail that has been given out, using intuition and analogy in developing a vital picture of the occurence.

We learn that the Monad is present in every particle of Space—in every manifested form. "The Vital Fires are in all things, and not an atom is devoid of them."[1] Without the Monad no evolution is possible.[2] At first, involution necessarily preceding evolution,[3] the Monad is involved in the lowest form of matter, the mineral,[4] where on account of its inconceivable fineness its evolutionary effect on matter—the opposite pole from Spirit—is very slow; it required billions of years[5] to work up matter through the lower kingdoms, mineral, vegetable, animal, till a body was developed, superior to the animal's; beyond that it was impossible to proceed, unaided,[6] for the Monad (Atma-Buddhi) is unconscious on this plane.[7] An intelligent consciousness was needed for further advance, a principle between the Monad and the animal nature, to serve as a vehicle of spiritual influence. For there was a gap below Buddhi which it could not cross of itself."[8]

The mindless man had come to the position where no further evolution could occur till this gap should be filled. He had received a dim consciousness in the early Races,[9] a primitive and weak spark of intelligence from higher beings, but no *self*-consciousness, no sense of moral responsibility. He could communicate with his fellows through a kind of thought transference, but was as irresponsible as the lower animals.[10] Manas, the Thinker, was merely a germ; the principle was latent, potential.[11]

The early Third Race "men" were not all developed to the same degree; some of them had come to the point where they were ready for the next evolutionary step; some were only half ready; and the

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[1] *Secret Doctrine*, II, 267.
[2] *Ocean*, 53.
[3] *S.D.* I, 183.
[4] *S.D.* I, 246.
[5] *Ocean*, 19.
[6] *S.D.* I, 247.
[7] *S.D.* II, 123, note.
[8] *S.D.* II, 102-3, 241.
[9] *S.D.* II, 164-5.
[10] *S.D.* II, 198-9.
[11] *S.D.* II, 267.

NOTE.—This article is reprinted from THEOSOPHY, Vol. 23.

rest were mere animals of a superior form.[12] It is at this stage that the third stream of evolution comes to our notice.[13]

We have followed the physical evolution from the mineral up to the mindless man; the Monads, spiritual entities, were buried in the physical forms, for only through their presence could physical evolution take place; as matter was all this time becoming more and more dense, the Monads were being more and more involved in it, so that they were going down, as form and texture were going up.[14] This third stream is the intellectual, the gift of self-consciousness to the "mindless men," by means of which matter is raised, the Monad liberated, and in connection with both, the intellect developed.[15]

The Sons of Wisdom, advanced entities, (known also as the Sons of the Flame, Fiery Dhyanis, Agnishwattas, Solar Pitris, Radiant Archangels, Dhyani Chohans, Fire Devas, Rudras, Kumaras, the Virgin Angels, the Divine Rebels,—indeed, "There are a hundred appellations of the immeasurably mighty Rudras,"[16] who had won self-consciousness in other worlds of former Manvantaras,[17]) had still some Karmic debts to pay,[18] which they accepted willingly and courageously,[19] by coming down to the newly evolving humanity on earth, and incarnating there in the mindless men.[20] The time had come for Manas to plunge into matter and gain the necessary experience in it, by beginning its karmic duty of lifting up matter towards Spirit, its opposite pole, thereby freeing the involved Spirit, and progressing with Spirit and matter till it should transform the "finite into the infinite, the transient into the Eternal and Absolute."[21]

This third evolutionary stream is the Host of the Manasaputra. Some knew that the bodies of the least developed of the mindless men were neither ready nor suitable for their use, so they spurned them, leaving them to become the Narrow headed, destitute of higher knowledge till the Fourth Race.[22] Incidentally, they delayed too long, and thereby generated a new and terrible Karma, which is not yet paid off.[23] The Dhyanis turned from those who were half ready, projecting only a spark, which thereafter "burned low." When they looked at those who were ready, " 'In these shall we dwell,' said the Lords of the Flame and of the Dark Wisdom."[24]

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12 *S.D.* II, 168.
13 *S.D.* II, 241-2.
14 *S.D.* I, 181, 247.
15 *S.D.* I, 242 note; II, 161.
16 *S.D.* II, 182.
17 *S.D.* II, 167.
18 *S.D.* II, 79-80, 93-4.
19 *S.D.* II, 246.
20 *S.D.* II, 198.
21 *S.D.* I, 181.
22 *S.D.* I, 192; II, 161.
23 *S.D.* II, 228.
24 *S.D.* II, 161.

They entered these forms, so filling up the gap between the higher and the lower principles of man; and by reason of their fiery nature, kindled the germ of Manas in them; and, moreover, added to them the flame of their own minds.

Thus the Lighting of Manas was a double process;[25] not only did the Manasaputra incarnate bodily in the mindless men who were ready, they also by their contact with them lighted the germ of Manas which they already had, and so welded together the Monad and the lower principles.[26]

This use of the Fire symbol is not confined to the Ancient Wisdom; our own use of it is noticeable for we might say, continuing this experience, that in this way the darkness of the mindless men was lightened, their minds illuminated, their zeal kindled, their enthusiasm fired, and their hearts inflamed with spiritual devotion—for it is said that they became the fathers of the future Arhats.[27] And this was only the beginning of the process of enlightenment, for it still goes on wherever, by teaching and otherwise, the message of Theosophy is spread among those who are ready.[28]

When the Fiery Angels entered the bodies of the Third Race men, their Monads were not *added* to those already in the bodies, so that it made two Monads in each body; the Monadic essence is universal; their essence merely intensifies that of the mindless men.[29] The bodies in which the early part of the Host incarnated had been created by the mysterious and divine power called *Kriyasakti,*[30] latent in the will of every man, potent in the men of the early Third Race who, though mindless, were still very spiritual beings;[31] for not till the middle of the Fourth Race, did spirit reach its lowest level, when Spirit and matter were in equilibrium.[32]

It is evident that the Host of the Dhyanis did not incarnate all at once; the process was gradual, as are all processes in Nature. The descending Sons of the Flame did not settle upon the Elect of the Third Race like a flock of birds. There is a period of a few million years between the Lighting of the first mindless men, and the highly intelligent and intellectual *later* Lemurians.[33] The Dhyanis entered the forms as they became ready, generation after generation, each

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[25] *Answers,* 91; *S.D.* II, 80.
[26] *S.D.* II, 103.
[27] *S.D.* I, 207.
[28] *Answers,* 91; *S.D.* II, 281.
[29] *S.D.* II, 167.
[30] *S.D.* I, 207, 211.
[31] *S.D.* I, 188.
[32] *S.D.* I, 192.

Dhyani thereby becoming at once an "Eternal Pilgrim,"[34] and continuing to re-incarnate to this day. By the middle of the Fourth Race every man had received enlightenment.[35]

The symbolic ceremony of the Lighting of Candles is very beautiful in idea and in practice. The first candle symbolizes the One Source of Light, "The Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." From the One Light all the Dhyanis had received their light, and the many were lighted from the One. Each as he returned to incarnation brought back the light, and so lighted a man in each family as he entered it. Considering the second interpretation of the experience, each one's candle as soon as it receives the light is able to light that of his neighbor. In this way, if the light were passed on from one to another, the whole world could be illuminated for the reception of the coming Messenger.

We have seen that the Manasaputra spurned the bodies of the laggards of the Third Race; it is added that "they filled the Kama from their own essence."[36] Since they intensified the Kama of those who had no Manas to direct their actions, we can readily see and understand why the "sin of the mindless" occurred, and why the Karma of the Dhyanis is so terrible.[37] This should mean much to us, for we ourselves, advanced enough to be among the few to recognize the Wisdom-Religion, must be some of those very Dhyanis who incarnated, having spurned those who were not ready, and it is we who are now working out the Karma which we generated in those days of our pride and scorn.

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[33] *S.D.* II, 263.
[34] *Ocean,* 54; *S.D.* I, 268.
[35] *S.D.* I, 184-5; II, 228.
[36] *S.D.* II, 161, 241-2.
[37] *S.D.* II, 272, 411.

"THE GITA"—INFORMAL ESSAYS

II

THE opening chapters of the *Gita* present Arjuna in a most unhappy condition, but Krishna, though "tenderly smiling," does not appear to feel sorry for his pupil, beset by so many difficulties. Instead he emphasizes what a sorry figure a warrior cuts when he sits on the battlefield with his head in his hands, This seems to be an indication that sympathy is of secondary importance to a spiritual guide such as Krishna.

If we remember always to interpret the personage of Krishna as a symbol for the constantly-aspiring spiritual center of perception within each man, it is not difficult to understand the relationship between Krishna and "sympathy," for if the struggle of the creative spirit is the core of lasting happiness in human experience, then the greatest help that can be given any man is to encourage him to persist in his efforts. What ordinarily passes for sympathy often flows from a belief—in Theosophical terms, fallacious—that life is, at times, too hard to meet with tranquility and redoubled effort.

Throughout the *Gita,* Krishna keeps reminding Arjuna of latent *positive* capacities. At times he addresses his slightly quavering disciple as the "best of the Kurus," and the tribe of Kurus was not a lowly company. Again he is frequently referred to, by an interjection into the discourse, as "Dhananjaya, the despiser of wealth," while elsewhere Krishna makes clear that men may aspire to success in spiritual effort after they have set aside all desire for gain, property, or riches. This implies that Arjuna, despite his temporary weakness, has already filled certain indispensable requirements, and by this means has become one of the select few of "fortunes's favored soldiers." Krishna also addresses Arjuna as "Son of Bharata," or in other words, a personification of that Warrior Quality in man which enables him to attack difficult odds and to emerge victorious.

A short time ago, one of the few modern heirs to Indian greatness was brought before a large American radio audience. The

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NOTE.—This is the second of a series of articles which were originally printed in THEOSOPHY, Volumes 38 and 39.

Governor of Illinois, in introducing Jawaharlal Nehru, included in his remarks of high praise numerous expressions of sympathy for the trying years Nehru spent in prison as a consequence of championing the cause of Indian political freedom. In response, Pandit Nehru, after thanking the Governor for the good will which his words were undoubtedly meant to convey, expressed the opinion that such sympathy was "rather wasted." He then proceeded to explain something which Krishna clearly knew, and which Arjuna had not yet fully discovered—that the highest happiness for man comes from a transcendental fulfillment of one's life, and that such fulfillment is always associated with times of dire struggle, calling forth all of man's moral capacity and mental ingenuity.

This might also explain why presentations of the Theosophical philosophy frequently strike a casually interested public as being "cold." Like Krishna, all those whose effort is to represent Pure Theosophy aim to assure each "warrior" that he does not *need* sympathy, but requires additional means to increase his stamina and perceptiveness. Generations who have turned to conventional religion for sentimental solace will undoubtedly find something missing in, let us say, the public presentation at the United Lodge of Theosophists of the Theosophical perspective. But what is missing is the same thing that was missing when Krishna refused to give Arjuna any encouragement in believing that he was really not the man for the battle. Krishna may be said to appear in many guises, and there is all the room in the world for human warmth and understanding within the context of human relationships among those who are dedicated to the Theosophic life. But Krishna's most inspiring embodiment, and therefore the embodiment responsible for all persevering happiness, is that of the Disdainer of Weakness.

All this might be correlated, in turn, with Wm. Q. Judge's suggestion on page five of the *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*—that the scripture needs to be studied "by the light of that spiritual lamp—be it small or great—which the supreme soul will feed and increase within us if we attend to its behests and diligently inquire after it. Such is the promise by Krishna." Man, to fully know himself, must be thrown back fully upon himself. He must not rely upon someone else's formulation of truth, upon religious utterance or ritual. Nor must he rely upon his supposed former acquisitions of knowledge, for real knowledge relates to an unfolding present which

always requires modifications in the formulation of what has been learned before. Arjuna cannot even fall back upon whatever "goodness" he has attained as a worthy man, for Krishna informs him at once that the volunteer in spiritual warfare *must transcend all of the "human" qualities,* including that of goodness.

If this were the whole task Krishna set for himself in instructing Arjuna, the *Bhagavad-Gita* could be contained in a very few pages. But Krishna's discourse makes possible the study of that philosophy and psychology which intensifies the power of soul, and illustrates some of the first principles of such a philosophy. For the warrior-soul who sufficiently understands his calling, every principle discovered by the combined lights of spirit and mind becomes a worthy weapon, part of his equipment in "fighting out the field." The dissemination of philosophy differs in this respect from the dessemination of religious teaching. The latter can only preserve, while it is within the natural province of the former to create.

If we are to inquire about the light of that "spiritual lamp" which may be increased by the Supreme Soul, we come to the necessity for what has been termed the Third Fundamental Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*. That men are all touched with the grace of a mysterious divinity has been a common intuition of most religions, but the secret of establishing further communion has too often been closed away behind theological doors. The "light of the spiritual lamp" is increased as the disciple Arjuna perceives *all things in Krishna, as well as Krishna in all things*—and when he establishes a view of spiritual evolution made possible by the communal relationship of all beings. Our perceptions, therefore, never grow by "grace," nor do they grow automatically: they expand as we reach out toward and penetrate other beings. This is the philosophical basis for the religious formulation holding that we "receive the most when we give the most to others," for in the act of giving we are best able to see another in his or her true light.

In a later section of *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita,* Mr. Judge does hold forth one kind of encouragement, for he says that "reliance and pressure upon our inner nature, in moments of darkness, are sure to be answered by the voice of Krishna, the inner guide." And so it was with Arjuna. No matter how difficult and complicated was the task of battle selected for him by Krishna, he was enabled to feel sure of one thing—Krishna, himself, would always be there.

Chapter second of the *Gita* is a difficult chapter for the thoughtful student to "finish," for we find here, at least in brief, most of the psychological equations inevitable in any philosophy addressed to the enduring soul. Mr. Judge's *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* contains forty pages on this second chapter, nearly twice the space given to any other section. It is even possible to suggest that a student may learn more from a consistent re-reading of this second chapter over a period of many months than by attempting to "master" the eighteen divisions of the *Gita* successively. Every re-reading may lead us to see much that we missed before, and suddenly bring clearly to our minds various correlations for which our thinking faculties were not previously prepared.

Krishna, in the second chapter, loses no time in outlining the three fundamental propositions of Theosophical philosophy, though not in their most easily recognizable forms. First, we hear that the "unprovable spirit is inexhaustible." From this it follows that one who sees Spirit to be the most substantial reality can therefore feel forever encouraged by his own equally "inexhaustible" opportunities for advance in evolution. What matters death to one who sees that he may ultimately attain whatever he wills, regardless of the number of his physical forms he must see destroyed!

Here we come to a consideration of the law of cycles—keynote to H.P.B.'s second fundamental proposition. The cycles of death and rebirth are incessant, "certain to all things which are born," and thus every conscious being is not really separated from, but co-existent and at least partly in harmony with, the fundamental law of cycles throughout all nature. Reward and punishment are self-directed, and man may attain, *whenever he is ready,* to that condition wherein he shall "in action still be free from sin." Thus man conquers the Law—or, rather, identifies himself with the meaning of that dynamic pattern of interaction between all beings which *is* Universal Law. While the man whose heart and mind are not thus at rest "hath no calm," in the one who attains to tranquillity of thought "therefrom shall soon result a separation from all troubles."

The passage of the soul to greater evolutionary heights is made possible by the universal perspectives on Spirit and Law suggested in the first two Fundamentals. The man who has listened to the counsels of wisdom implicit in them will acquire a new "time

sense"; thus, and thus only, will he be able to avoid being of "those whose impulse to action is found in its reward." Rewards are of time and not of eternity. The evolution upward is at one and the same time an evolution inward, for the goal is not one of time but one of soul. When man has become acquainted with the "Supreme," he restrains not only his "tumultuous senses and organs," but also even his tumultuous personal *heart,* and "remains in devotion at rest in the supreme, his true self." He passes on to Nirvana—the symbol of that state of spiritual attainment which betokens mastery over the complications of the world of the senses. Time—that is, beginnings and endings, rewards and punishments—he no longer fears.

It has become a part of Theosophical tradition to call the *Gita* a "devotional" book. Since Arjuna is a warrior, and the scene of the dialogue is a battle chariot, it becomes clear that the word "devotional" has little to do with conventional piety—the latter quality we usually expect will emerge in a more monastic setting. Although the whole of the discourse gives an enlarged meaning to "devotion," Krishna provides one simple and clear definition. He tells Arjuna to "seek an asylum in this *mental* devotion *which is knowledge.*" And so, for the Theosophists of all ages, it is the light of the fire of Manas which enables true singleness of purpose and steadfastness of heart. The "devotion" which flows from an emotional efflorescence of the personality can never reach to more than the conventional virtues, and these, we are informed, must later be transcended by the disciple. Each virtue may even become an opaque. chrysalis for the soul, whereas the only worthy asylum is that state of mind which refuses self-satisfaction. Mental devotion can only be assured when the man has determined never to cease using his creative, perceptive faculties. Thus Krishna says, "When thy heart shall have worked through the snares of delusion, then thou wilt attain to high indifference as to those doctrines which are already taught or which are yet to be taught. When thy mind once liberated from the Vedas shall be fixed immovably in contemplation, then shalt thou attain to devotion."

Of course, this leads to a further question: what is this "high indifference"? Since "indifference" is elsewhere used as a synonym for *tamas*—darkness or ignorance—we must infer that there is no "high indifference" which may be applied to duties or responsibilities. But it should also be clear that formal ethical doctrines are never more than poor representations of "duties."

Now, "a high indifference" need not mean cynicism or disdain. To rise *above contempt* is to reach understanding. Whenever we do reach a feeling of clear understanding on any matter, we experience something of that feeling of "impersonality" which the greatest philosophers so highly prize. Arjuna is taught that *respect for the function of the Vedas* is necessary as an indication of understanding gained about them, even though he may soon pass to that state where the specific formulations of teachings no longer serve him.

In tracing significant developments of thought in the major fields of science, we see an increasing awareness that the ideal scientist must strive to rid himself of all preoccupation with his particular branch of science, and attain "objectivity"—especially in respect to his own hypotheses in that particular field. The reason is clearly because every set pattern of the mind dams up and withholds manasic energy which might otherwise flow onward to sustain and encourage new forms of growth. Perhaps, then, there is no difference between these three: Krishna's "mental devotion," a "high indifference to doctrines"—and the insistence of Socrates that men incessantly question all the things they casually take for granted.

The function of the Theosophical Society, as conceived in 1875, was largely to build a platform of "high indifference" or impartiality, from which to examine all partisan religious, scientific, and ethical theories. The questioning attitude, as H.P.B. insists in the *Key to Theosophy,* was of much greater value to the Society than Christian piety, and it is *sine qua non* of impartiality.

We shall note that Arjuna's opening speech, in which he outlines the causes of his despair, has all the eloquence that may easily be mustered to support a partisan or "too personal" position. Arjuna says, "As I am of a disposition which is affected by compassion and the fear of doing wrong, how can I be content with the possession of wealth and pleasures which are polluted with the blood of my enemies?" Krishna's reply reminds Arjuna that because he is thinking in terms of self and *not* in the terms of the Supreme Spirit, he therefore falsely considers as "enemies" those who can never be considered enemies by the spiritual man. Arjuna will become "fitted for immortality" only when he ceases thinking in terms of *mortality,* and recognizes that the fear of doing wrong is always of less importance than that duty which impels to battle on behalf of a better kingdom for all men—whether considered "enemies" or not.

Since impartiality is thus suggested as providing a basis for that portion of morality we call fairness to others, so also the problem of wrong-doing receives helpful redefinition. "Sin" is simply the mediocre performance of action, and to be "free from sin" means to perform actions with all the energy and devotion at one's command, without self-interest.

A Voyage of Discovery

We bring our friends and brethren no mere feather-headed fancies, no light-spun speculation, when we offer them some toil-won fragments of the mighty mountain of occult knowledge, at the base of whose hardly accessible heights we have learned to estimate their significance and appreciate their worth. Is it asked why we do not spread out the whole scroll of this much-vaunted philosophy for their inspection at once, and so exhibit clearly its all-sufficing coherence? That question at least will hardly be asked by thoughtful men who realize what an all-sufficient philosophy of the universe must be. As well might Columbus have been expected to bring back America in his ships to Spain. "Good friends, America will not come," he might have said, "but it is there across the waters and if you voyage as I have done, and the waves do not smother you, mayhap you will find it too."

—H. P. Blavatsky

THE LAWS OF AFFINITY

KARMA, TANHA and SKANDHAS, are the almighty trinity in one, and the cause of our re-births. The illustration of painting our own present likeness at death, and that likeness becoming the future personality is very poetical and graphic, but we claim it as an occult teaching. At the solemn moment of death no man can fail to see himself under his true colours, and no self-deception is of any use to him any longer. Thence the following thing happens. As at the instant of drowning man sees marshalled past his mind's eye the whole of his life, with all its events, effects and causes, to the minutest details, so at the moment of death, he sees himself in all his moral nakedness, unadorned by either human flattery or self-adulation, and, as he is; hence, *as he* or rather, as his astral double combined with his *Kama* principle—*shall be*. For the vices, defects and especially the passions of the preceding life become, through certain laws of affinity and transference, the germs of the future potentialities in the *animal* soul (*Kama rupa*), hence of its dependent, the astral double (*linga sharira*)—at the subsequent birth. It is the *personality* alone which changes; the real reincarnating principle, the EGO, remains always the same; and it is its KARMA that guides the idiosyncracies and prominent moral traits of the *old* "personality" that was (and that the EGO knew not how to control), to re-appear in the *new* man that will be. These traits and passions pursue and fasten on the yet plastic third and fourth principles of the child, and—unless the EGO struggles and conquers—they will develop with tenfold intensity and lead the adult man to his destruction. For it is they who are the tools and weapons of the Karmic LAW OF RETRIBUTION. Thus, the Prince says very truly that our good and bad actions "are the only tools with which we paint our likenesses at death," for the *new* man is invariably the son and progeny of the old man that was.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

letters • questions • comment

References to the spiritual nature of man sometimes make it seem like something far off and not of this world. Does the spiritual nature have correspondences in the world of personality?

If, as is so often stated, Man is the microcosm of the Universe, and if his spiritual, psychic, and intellectual evolution proceed on parallel lines with physical evolution, then the correspondences of which the question speaks must everywhere exist. The Monad, which is the spiritual ego, we are told, "becomes a personal ego when it incarnates." (*S.D.* I, 245.) This suggests that the immortal attributes of the higher being, when reflected in matter, become mortal and finite attributes of the personal man. By this means humans acquire their dual nature, and are subjected to the illusions which result. This personal mind is a necessity for experience on this plane. As *The Secret Doctrine* puts it:

> In other words, the two higher principles *can have no individuality on Earth,* cannot be *man,* unless there is (*a*) the Mind, the *Manas-Ego,* to cognize itself, and (*b*) the terrestrial *false* personality, or the body of egotistical desires and the personal Will, to cement the whole, as if round a pivot (which it is, truly), to the physical form of man. It is the *Fifth* and the *Fourth* principles—*Manas* and *Kama rupa*—that contain the dual personality: the real immortal Ego *(if it assimilates itself to the two higher)* and the false and transitory personality, the *mayavi* or astral body, so-called, or the *animal-human* Soul—the two having to be closely blended for purposes of a *full* terrestrial existence. (II, 241-42.)

Some account of this necessity for the personal man is given by H.P.B. in "Psychic and Noetic Action," where she explains that the higher Ego has to reflect itself in matter, generating the Personal Mind as a temporary principle, in order to become an active intelligence on this plane. Thus, while the inner constitution of incarnated mind is Manasic, the personal mind, its reflection or ray, is leavened with the Astral Light. Matter is the plane of separateness, and that which acts on the material plane has to appear as separate, hence the illusion of separateness which for a great many

becomes the sole basis of action in human life. The achievement of conscious godhood—the fulfillment of evolution—is not possible without the endurance of this ordeal of illusion.

As H.P.B. explains in the *Key* (p. 159-60), "Buddhi would remain only an impersonal spirit without this element which it borrows from the human soul, which conditions and makes of it, in this illusive Universe, *as it were something separate* from the universal soul for the whole period of the cycle of incarnation." This human soul is the connecting link between Spirit and Matter, or heaven and earth. And, as said in *The Secret Doctrine* (II, 103), "It is only by the attractive force of the contrasts that the two opposites—Spirit and Matter—can be cemented on Earth, and, smelted in the fire of self-conscious experience and suffering, find themselves wedded in Eternity."

In the article quoted above, H.P.B. says: "It is a part of the mission of the Manasic Ray, to get gradually rid of the blind, deceptive element which, though it makes of it an active spiritual entity on this plane, still brings it into so close contact with matter as to entirely becloud its divine nature and stultify its intuitions." Since we are able, as here implied, to get rid of the deceptions of the Astral Light, it follows that the two aspects of our being, the higher and the personal, are in conjunction, at least potentially, and that we are able to understand how the higher realities become inverted in personal life. We intuit that the symbolism of great myths has a higher meaning, just as we realize that the battleground described in the *Gita* is really the great field of the psychospiritual evolution of man. All symbolism intended for the instruction of mankind relies on such parallels. We are largely dependent upon them for our inner instruction, since the ancients, knowing "that nothing could be preserved in human memory without some outward symbol," placed in the world numerous reminders in the form of monument and myth and epic, all the embodiments of symbolic teachings. The symbolic formula, H.P.B. says, often reaches far beyond our intellects, or else the meaning "will fade out from human remembrance." (*S.D.* I, 473.)

Yet there is in each one of us, she also says, the fire of divinity:

> This fire is the higher Self, the Spiritual Ego, or that which is eternally reincarnating under the influence of its lower personal Selves, changing with every re-birth, full of *Tanha* or desire to

> live. It is a strange law of Nature that, on this plane, the higher (Spiritual) Nature should be, so to say, in bondage to the lower. Unless the Ego takes refuge in the Atman, the ALL-SPIRIT, and merges entirely into the essence thereof, the personal Ego may goad it to the bitter end. This cannot be thoroughly understood unless the student makes himself familiar with the mystery of evolution, which proceeds on triple lines—spiritual, psychic and physical. (II, 109.)

The *complexity* of the correspondences between the higher and the lower processes will perhaps be better understood through a consideration of the following:

> There was a spiritual, a psychic, an intellectual, and an animal evolution, from the highest to the lowest, as well as a physical development—from the simple to the homogeneous, up to the more complex and heterogeneous; though not quite on the lines traced for us by the modern evolutionists. This double evolution in two contrary directions, required various ages, of divers natures and degrees of spirituality and intellectuality, to fabricate the being now known as man. Furthermore, the one absolute, ever acting and never erring law, which proceeds on the same lines from one eternity (or Manvantara) to the other—ever furnishing an ascending scale for the manifested, or that which we call the great Illusion (*Maha-Maya*), but plunging Spirit deeper and deeper into materiality on the one hand, and then *redeeming it through flesh* and liberating it—this law, we say, uses for these purposes the Beings from other and higher planes, men, or *Minds* (Manus), in accordance with their Karmic exigencies. (*S.D.* II, 87-88.)

The parallels between the faculties of the higher and lower man are numerous. In the *Key* H.P.B. discusses the several kinds of memory, pointing out that while ordinary memory—such as recollection—depends entirely on the health and normality of the physical brain, spiritual memory, which she calls *reminiscence,* is the memory of the soul, adding—

> And it is *this* memory which gives the assurance to almost every human being, whether he understands it or not, of his having lived before and having to live again. Indeed, as Wordsworth has it:
>
> "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,
> The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
> Hath elsewhere had its setting,
> And cometh from afar."

A reading of the story of Prometheus and of the extended commentary and interpretation by H.P.B. would help to illuminate the correspondences between the personal and the egoic aspects of human life. It also gives clues for the interpretation of other myths, such as the story of the wanderings of Ulysses. Meanwhile a truly illuminating passage on the dual ego—the higher and lower Manas—in *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge* (pp. 67-68), offered in reply to the question of whether they are two mind principles, or simply one, has direct bearing on this question. When the questioner says, they are "one, are they not?" H.P.B. responds:

> They are, and yet they are not—and that is the great mystery. The Higher Manas or EGO is essentially divine, and therefore pure; no stain can pollute it, as no punishment can reach it, *per se,* the more so since it is innocent of, and takes no part in, the deliberate transactions of its Lower Ego. Yet by the very fact that, though dual and during life the Higher is distinct from the Lower, "the Father and Son" *are one,* and because that in reuniting with the parent Ego, the Lower Soul fastens upon and impresses upon it all its bad as well as good actions—both have to suffer, the Higher Ego, though innocent and without blemish, has to bear the punishment of the misdeeds committed by the *lower* Self together with it in their future incarnation. . . .
>
> The *Secret Doctrine* shows that the Manasa-Putras or incarnating EGOS have taken upon themselves, voluntarily and knowingly, the burden of all the future sins of their future personalities. Thence it is easy to see that it is neither Mr. A. nor Mr. B., nor any of the personalities that periodically clothe the Self-Sacrificing EGO, which are the real sufferers, but verily the innocent *Christos* within us.

THE SPIRIT OF ALL

True Theosophy is the only key to unlock the mysteries of all noble, ancient philosophies. Secure this key, and all inconsistencies will fade away. For a student of occultism, these externals have no charm. He tries to penetrate into the spirit of everything. For him, all exotericism is a mere wrangling of terms.

—DAMODAR

on the lookout

"Something To Do With Consciousness"

In a cocky and confident article titled "Getting Serious about the Occult," in the *Atlantic* for October, 1978, Michael Brown shows that the fundamental background assumption of scientists is that the universe is senseless, its happenings random, and that scientific dissenters from this view are few and far between. Yet his article is intended to present evidence that an increasing number of investigators are beginning to wonder if there is not a causal part played by mind in even physical events. The article is devoted mainly to experiments in which, seemingly, the laws of chance are violated. Work by Helmut Schmidt, a theoretical physicist, involving guesses by subjects as to which of four randomly illuminated light bulbs would go on, led him to this conclusion: "The odds against obtaining this or a better score by chance is more than ten billion to one." The report of another experiment by Schmidt, in which the subjects were invited to make the lights go on by thought, gave a result which caused the *Atlantic* writer to say: "Preliminary tests bore out his idea that a mental force was influencing the machine, he says, and in years of follow-up experimentation, that conclusion grew stronger. Something to do with consciousness appeared to be affecting cold hardware."

"All of Them Failed"!

Such cautious admissions are becoming more numerous, thus bearing out two observations by Madame Blavatsky: first, that science would be led to admit metaphysical reality or psychic forces, not from any instruction from Theosophists or other unconventional thinkers, but by the enormous *gaps* and *chasms* that open daily and will still be opening before them, as one discovery follows the other, until they are finally knocked off their feet by the

ninth wave of simple common sense." (*S.D.* I, 620.) She also said that when such discoveries are made, they will rebound to the credit of modern science, as though such things had never been known before. In his article, Mr. Brown shows little or no respect for anything but highly controlled statistical evidence, disposing in a few introductory paragraphs of the findings of practically all pre-scientific psychic research. He begins:

> In the ninety-odd years since the occult entered makeshift laboratories, a cadre of scientists and would-be scientists—often called parapsychologists—has attempted to prove that man's mind possesses hidden powers of transcendence, its own *élan vital.* Until recently, most of these efforts were aimed at indisputably documenting extrasensory perception, or ESP. All of them failed.

"A Contributor Known as Mind"

At present interest is focused on psychokinesis (PK), which means the ability of the mind to affect the motions of matter. Mr. Brown reports what seems the anxiety of the CIA concerning the military possibility of such powers, and the Navy, he says, is funding PK research! He describes a few claims of extraordinary healing through mental influence, and makes this conceding statement: "an outside, undiscovered entity . . . appears to be at work, a contributor known as the mind." For his conclusion Mr. Brown quotes from a researcher at Maimonides Medical Center who says:

> For the first time in the history of science we have begun to forge an empirical approach to one of the most profound and ancient mysteries, the nature of mind and its relationship to the physical world. We have no answers, but we have begun to develop methods that will enable us to ask some different kinds of questions.

Mind the Conductor

Yet the answers exist, have always existed, and have been of record in the West since 1877 when H.P.B. published *Isis Unveiled.* In her Preface to that work she pointed out that official science would reject the testimony of both ancient philosophers and modern adepts, and that pseudo-scientists would denounce Theosophic explanations. The *Atlantic* writer simply ignores them, indicating that the attitudes of present-day authorities are similar to those of a century ago. However, the quotations assembled by Mr. Brown will be of interest to many more than hard-core skep-

tical scientists, as for example the following:

> "There is no good evidence that the brain alone can carry out the work the mind does," the late Wilder Penfield, the famous Canadian brain surgeon wrote, adding, "It is easier to rationalize man's being on the basis of two elements (material, immaterial) than on the basis of one." Nobel Laureate Sir John Eccles ventures further, suggesting that the mind, when it wants action, assembles brain activity the same way a conductor organizes an orchestra. "The mind makes these very slight and subtle changes for hundreds of millions of cells, gradually bringing it through and channeling it into the correct target cells to make a movement," he says. "And so there is psychokinesis, mind acting on a material object, namely brain cells." In other words: "All of the brain is in the mind, but not all of the mind is in the brain."

Krishna, speaking at a philosophical level, said something quite similar concerning "The Kingly Mystery": "All this universe is pervaded by me in my invisible form; all things exist in me, but I do not exist in them."

Dr. Stevenson's Researches

Another magazine with a vast circulation, perhaps rivaling the *Reader's Digest*, presents a topic of interest to Theosophists—Reincarnation. *Family Circle* for June 14 published an interview with Dr. Ian Stevenson, a psychiatrist who was drawn to consider the possibilities of rebirth because he learned from his practice that "there are cases that we cannot satisfactorily explain by genetics, environmental influences, or a combination of these." Dr. Stevenson has been pursuing this research for more than ten years and has collected material on some 1,700 cases of possible reincarnation, attempting to verify such claims through the gathering of evidence. Some of this work is described in *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation,* but the *Family Circle* interview is in some ways more interesting than the deliberately "scientific" approach used in his book.

Cases of Memory

Asked what common denominator he had found among the cases studied, Dr. Stevenson replied:

> First, a child who speaks about a previous life nearly always begins to do so between the ages of two and four. Occasionally he may begin at an older age, but this is uncommon. Second, such children nearly always stop talking, at least spontaneous-

> ly, about the previous life between the ages of five and seven. Again, exceptions do occur, and some subjects . . . appear to have memories persisting into later childhood and even adulthood. It is often difficult to know then whether they have kept the original imaged memories they once had or are merely telling what other persons—such as their parents—say they said when they were younger. Third, in a large percentage of the cases from all countries so far studied, the deceased person whose life a child claims to remember died in some violent manner—through accident, murder, suicide or war.

Law of Rebirth

Dr. Stevenson naturally likes to locate cases in which a previous existence is claimed in the *recent* past, since this sometimes enables him to obtain corroborative detail from still living persons. This may account for the frequency of reports of a violent end to the last life among his subjects. At any rate, he speaks of this frequency among subjects in various parts of the world, including the United States. Why, it may be wondered, do those who died a violent death in a past life seem to remember their past more easily? A reason may be deduced from H.P.B.'s remark in *The Secret Doctrine* (II, 303) that, "save in the case of young children, and of individuals whose lives were violently cut off by some accident, no Spiritual Entity can reincarnate before a period of many centuries has elapsed." In such exceptional cases, there is the possibility that the astral body is the same as that of the former life, which might very well assist in personal recollections. The basis for this is provided in a statement in *Isis Unveiled* (I, 351.):

> . . . the appearance of the same . . . astral monad . . . is not a rule in nature; it is an exception. . . . It is preceded by a violation of the laws of harmony of nature, and happens only when the latter, seeking to restore its disturbed equilibrium, violently throws back into earth-life the astral monad which had been tossed out of the circle of necessity by crime or accident. Thus, in cases of abortion, of infants dying before a certain age, and of congenital and incurable idiocy. . . .

Parental Attitudes

Parents who believe in reincarnation, Dr. Stevenson says, are likely to listen with interest to what their children remember about past lives, and he believes this may be beneficial in various ways.

Drawing on examples found in other lands, he says:

> I think these non-Western parents also have a much greater acceptance of "the child as he is" than does the average parent in the West. Parents who believe in reincarnation believe their child has a history before the conception of his body and also that he has a responsibility for further development, even in infancy. Since they do not consider that they are making the child from its beginning, as one makes an automobile in a factory, they feel less responsibility about the outcome and less guilt if something goes wrong.

The Spirit of Inquiry

Such common-sense inferences concerning the value of reincarnation as the basis of a philosophy of life are valuable indeed. What could be more persuasive to open-minded parents? Dr. Stevenson's chief contribution may lie in comments such as this. Meanwhile, he will not say that he himself "believes" in reincarnation, observing that personal belief is unimportant save for the individual who is the believer. The psychiatrist adds:

> I believe that everyone should examine the evidence for reincarnation for himself and make up his own mind. I do not think the evidence that I have obtained so far compels any conclusion unless, perhaps, it is that of the importance of continuing this research. Yet evidence can be persuasive even when not compelling. So I am willing to say one thing further. Formerly, a belief in reincarnation rested—for those who held it—on a base of oral traditions or religious scriptures. I believe that now a person convinced by the evidence can point to that evidence as a basis for his or her belief.

"A Surprising Improvement"

The simple yet philosophic tone of Dr. Stevenson's remarks in this interview show him to be essentially a teacher in attitude, and one who might be said to recognize, as Mr. Judge said in the *Ocean,* that this in an age of *inquiry*. Asked a second time about helpful parental attitudes, he said:

> Personally, I cannot see what harm comes from listening to a child who talks about what seems to him to be a previous life he lived. Nor can I see what is to be lost by at least provisionally supposing that reincarnation occurs. I think that if more American parents would open their minds to this possi-

> bility—and incidentally according to a Gallup poll of a few years back, about 20% of Americans already believe in reincarnation—they might enjoy a surprising improvement in their relationships with their children. They would feel no less responsibility for them, but they would feel less guilt about things that go wrong. And I think they would enjoy their children more if they could regard them as being just people, like themselves. In the West, we do not usually consider that a child is a person. It seems to me that the idea that a parent is *making* a child into a person is rather demeaning to the child, not to say arrogant on the part of the parent who believes this. Why not try thinking of infants and children as already being persons, but ones temporarily housed in small bodies?

It is not too much to say that Dr. Stevenson gives a fine example of the meaning of *practical* Theosophy—Theosophy as the rational explanation of things and not just the tenets.

Disenchantment and Rebuilding

Early in *Isis Unveiled*—published a little more than a century ago—H.P.B. wrote of the great cyclic change that would soon come over the modern world. "Unless we mistake the signs," she said, "the day is approaching when the world will receive proofs that only ancient religions were in harmony with nature, and ancient science embraced all that can be known." That she wrote, as she often said, for the future is now manifest. It was in the midst of the time of Victorian optimism and complacency that she said: "An era of disenchantment and rebuilding will soon begin—nay, has already begun." The "disenchantment," hardly evident to any but the most perceptive of her contemporaries, has now grown widespread, with scores of thoughtful writers now elaborating on its discouragements. And the "rebuilding," for those able to recognize its signs, is already well on the way.

"Intelligible Geometry"

A recent example in the world of scholarship is the book, *Islamic Patterns,* by an English professor of architecture, Keith Critchlow, now published in this country by Schocken. The purpose of this work is to show that the arts and architecture of Islamic civilization are founded on philosophic and metaphysical teaching, inspired by as well as paralleling Pythagorean mathe-

matics and science. Pythagoras, H.P.B. says (*Isis,* I, 318), taught that the entire universe is one vast system of mathematically correct combinations, adding that "Plato shows the deity *geometrizing.*" All Islamic art, Mr. Critchow shows, is based upon this conception, and the first chapter of his book illustrates the derivation of geometrical forms from a central point, in a manner reminiscent of the early pages of *The Secret Doctrine.* He begins with a quotation from a Persian text which distinguishes between the two sorts or applications of mathematics, just as Plato did. The following is from a text used by the Brotherhood of Purity, translated by S. H. Nasr:

> Know, oh brother, . . . that the study of sensible geometry leads to skill in all the practical arts, while the study of intelligible geometry leads to skill in the intellectual arts because this science is one of the gates through which we move to the knowledge of the essence of the soul, and that is the root of all knowledge.

Symbolism of a Doorway

There is frequent reference in this book to both Pythagoras and Plato—as for example in sections on the pentagon and the Pythagorean triangle. The architecture under discussion is shown to have underlying philosophic significance, as for example in the account of a portal or door:

> What is a door? It constitutes a passing from one situation to another, a transition; this can be viewed lightly in a purely mechanical sense, or taken in the seriousness that a change of consciousness demands. The entrance to a sacred place at any time in human history was a matter of great import. It necessitated an effort of mind and heart: to leave behind the petty concerns of daily life—the debts and indebtedness, the desires for material gain, the frustrations, the jealousies, suspicions, meanness and deceit. . . . The doorway, as the symbol of threshold, is the most appropriate place for the content of sensible geometry to affect a man's perceptual awareness and remind him of the greater values that one might expect to experience on entering either another situation or state of consciousness.
>
> The Moorish doorway shown opposite remains as a reminder as much to the present-day visitor as it did when it was built in Islamic times in Spain.

Pythagorean Teaching

The two aspects of Islamic architecture—the practical and the symbolic—are developed at great length by the author, who provides numerous drawings of the patterns used in both construction and decoration. The emphasis, however, is always on the origins of design in philosophic or spiritual teaching. After telling how to construct the Pythagorean triangle, Mr. Critchlow says:

> This deceptively simple description of the philosophical model was apparently used by the school of Pythagoras, whose tradition was recorded by Plato for posterity in the *Timaeus,* belies the depth of its possible interpretation while at the same time reflecting the extreme simplicity of the model. The most decisive evidence for the influence and transmission of Pythagorean philosophy—in its correct meaning of "love of wisdom or knowledge"—is particularly seen in the works of the Brotherhood of Purity . . . and of the philosopher Suhrawardi. . . . he says: "Since the Sages of the past, because of the ignorance of the masses, expressed their sayings in secret symbols, the refutations which have been made against them have concerned the exterior of these sayings, not their real intentions." Suhrawardi criticizes Aristotle with severity for not understanding the world of archetypes, or "Platonic ideas" of his master and thereby through his works cutting things off and separating them from any reality of a higher order of being.
>
> The Brotherhood of Purity, however, speak of their indebtedness to and respect for the Samian Master: Pythagoras was the first who spoke of the nature of numbers. He taught that the nature of numbers is in relation with that of nature.

The Universal Harmony

The author goes on to speak of the spirit of the Pythagorean brotherhood and their reverence for the Tetractis, the ten points of which form "an equilateral triangle with four points per side—an aggregate of four digits adding up to and representing the perfect number, ten." What follows suggests that all the ancient arts and science had their origin in the teaching of sages:

Pythagorean Oath

> The supreme oath of the Pythagorean philosophical community was "By him who gave the fourness to our soul," and the aim of the community was a purification based on the same law and measure that governed the cosmos, and which in the terrestrial sphere take the form of rhythmic relations in the form of music, song, dance and ritual. Rhythm partakes

of and is governed by measure and can be stated in mathematical proportions; hence there was in the community a great enthusiasm for and devotion to the study of mathematics as a source of Divine Wisdom. Four was the number symbolic of justice as it represented or contained the perfect harmonious proportion.

Pythagoras and Plato Were Transmitters

That the modern world of learning is gradually coming into awareness of the roots of all culture and civilization is an ancient teaching—very largely lost, but capable of recovery through careful search—becomes plain from a book by a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a leading center of scientific studies. In his book, *Hamlet's Mill,* this teacher, Giorgio de Santillana, speaks of a "great worldwide archaic construction" which existed before the ancient Greeks, but was preserved by Pythagoras and Plato in "tantalizing fragments of a lost whole." Plato, Mr. Santillana adds, knew "the language of archaic myth" and transmitted "the imposing body of doctrine attributed to Pythagoras." During what he terms its "proto-Pythagorean" phase, he says, this ancient teaching "spread all over the East but with a focus in Susa"—a city of ancient Persia.

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